

On Pegasus' Wings

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Rabbi visits Egyptian Hospital



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

Chaplain (Capt.) Shmuel Felzenberg, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade Chaplain, gives candy to children at the Egyptian Hospital during humanitarian mission Feb. 22.

Chaplain (Capt.) Shmuel Felzenberg
Task Force Pegasus Chaplain

BAGRAM AIRFIELD – As we near the end of our second month in theater, various opportunities have been afforded to our troopers. Some training related, some mission related, but some of these experiences stand out from the rest. I am referring to the recent Pegasus Humanitarian Aid Relief Mission conducted at the Egyptian Hospital here on Bagram Airfield.

This was a brigade-internal ministry initiative, involving Pegasus troopers, Local Nationals from the nearby town of Bagram, as well as Egyptian soldiers and medical officers. The Egyptians are a Coalition partner who operate a field hospital to service the medical needs of the
see **HOSPITAL**, page 4.

82nd CAB has full control of aviation operations

Task Force Pegasus Public Affairs Office

BAGRAM AIRFIELD – With the transfer of authority Feb. 18 between the 1st Battalion 183rd Aviation Regiment of the Idaho National Guard and the 1st Battalion 285th Aviation Regiment of the Arizona National Guard, Task Force Pegasus has complete command of Army aviation operations for Operation Enduring Freedom VIII.

During the month of February, subordinate units from Task Force Pegasus participated in these ceremonies throughout Afghanistan.

The 3rd Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Battalion, Task Force Talon, assumed its mission Feb. 3. Two days later, the uncasing of Task Force Corsair's battalion colors placed 2nd Bn, 82nd CAB in command of Army aviation operations at Kandahar.

Task Forces Atlas, 122nd Aviation Support Battalion,

82nd CAB took control of aviation support operations in the Regional Command East Feb. 8.

"Each of us is an American hero, and TF Corsair will not succeed without the efforts of each Soldier in this task force," said Lt. Col. George Huggins, commander of TF Corsair.

"This is an important milestone for [all] task forces," said Lt. Col. Donald Kwan, commander, Task Force Desert Hawk. "We owe it to our Soldiers and their families to ensure that everyone returns home safely and to leave Afghanistan better able to support herself."

"These organizations represent excellence in Army aviation," said Col. Kelly Thomas, commander, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade. "You are a team of teams and you continue to impress me. You are [one of the many] reasons we do great work here in Afghanistan."

Pegasus 6 thanks family members for supporting mission

Col. Kelly Thomas
Task Force Pegasus Commander

Pegasus Family, let me start by saying what a wonderful job you are doing in keeping our morale and spirits up. We have enjoyed all of the letters of encouragement and care packages that we have been receiving; it really does make a difference. Thank you for making us stronger!

This past month has been extremely busy in Bagram. With all of the full spectrum combat aviation operations going on, we have finally completed our Transfer of Authorities throughout the Task Force. As you know, HHC Brigade transferred authority in January and our subordinate Battalions followed suit in February. As we welcomed in familiar faces from our Brigade, we said good-bye to a bunch of great Americans from the 10th Mountain Division. We also welcomed to our team the National Guard Aviation Battalion from Arizona, 1-285th ARB. It was an honor to witness and partake in the Transfer of Authority ceremonies.

As we enter our third month, we are finally getting settled in. We have discovered a bit of history surrounding our area of operations. Bagram played

a key role in the Soviet occupation and was also the initial staging point for the invading Soviet forces at the beginning of the conflict, with a number of airborne divisions being deployed here.

Following the withdrawal of the Soviet forces and the rise in the power of the Mujahideen, Afghanistan plunged into civil war. Control of the base was contested from 1999 onward between the Northern Alliance and Taliban, often with each controlling territory on opposing ends of the airfield.

You are all in our thoughts and prayers! Thank you for all that you do for your Paratrooper, as we wouldn't be as successful without your support! You truly are our heroes! God bless each of you! On Pegasus' Wings...All the Way, Airborne



Col. Kelly Thomas

Complacency is not part of 82nd CAB mindset

Command Sgt. Maj. David Brasfield
Task Force Pegasus Command Sergeant Major

Team Pegasus, freedom is not free and each and everyone of you are living proof of that. I am very proud of you

and your selfless service and dedication to our mission.

As we focus on our daily routines, so do our families and loved ones. The hardest part of any deployment is the time spent apart from the ones we care most about. Phones and internet are abundant, so make sure we are keeping in touch. I know my wife (Gigi) has it harder than I do with our 15-year-old twin boys.

The spouses of our Family Readiness Group are her sanity and shoulder to lean on, and I hope all deployed Soldiers' spouses and loved ones take advantage of our great and strong FRG. Speaking about our daily routines, we are fast establishing our battle rhythms, and I caution all to NOT let complacency set in. We must stay ever diligent to the dangers around us and mitigate the risks for successful and safe mission accomplishment. I have witnessed our Soldiers "getting after it" and applaud their energy and



Command Sgt. Maj. David Brasfield

Task Force Pegasus
OEF VIII
82nd Combat Aviation Brigade

On Pegasus' Wings

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GROUND AIR MOBILITY

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see **MINDSET**, page 3.

Pegasus hosts first formal event for religious support

Sgt. 1st Class Krishna M. Gamble
Task Force Pegasus Public Affairs Office

BAGRAM AIRFIELD – The third chapter of the book of Ecclesiastes in the King James Version of the Holy Bible explains to everything there a time and a season. Task Force Pegasus started this season of deployment by hosting a prayer breakfast Feb. 15 in the Pegasus Inn Forward Dining Facility.

The prayer breakfast marked the first formal event for religious support for the 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade since arrival in theater in January. Spiritual fitness is just as important as physical and mental fitness, a concept that has been conveyed to the Troopers on a regular basis by 82nd CAB commander, Col. Kelly Thomas, on many occasions.

“My God is an awesome God and all things are possible through Him,” Thomas said.

Special guest speaker for the event, Chap. (Lt. Col.) William Laigaie, 82nd Airborne Division command chaplain, opened his remarks with two energetic songs of which he played the guitar to accompany. The underlying theme of his message: Get Ready.

“This is a warning, a reminder, an encouragement, an invitation to get spiritually fit; to get ready,” Laigaie said.

“You have to get ready because you never know when or where life is going to take you,” said Sgt. 1st Class Arthur Pickett, platoon sergeant with Company E, 3rd Battalion, 82nd CAB.

Laigaie read scriptures from Psalm 32: 6-7 and Isaiah 55: 67, both encouraging readers to “seek the Lord” and get strength for the fight.



Sgt. 1st Class Krishna M. Gamble

Chaplain (Lt. Col.) William Laigaie, 82nd Airborne Division command chaplain leads the worship music with fellow Soldiers during the prayer breakfast held at the aviation dining facility Feb 15.

“God wants us to know who he is and he wants us to get ready now,” Laigaie said. “Ask yourself ‘what do you want from the Lord on this deployment?’ Then ask ‘what does the Lord want from me during this deployment.’”

“No matter how profound you get, the answer to the questions of who is God and what does He want, can be found in asking who are you and what do you want.”

“His words were great because we all need to get ready,” said Staff Sgt. Priscilla Atkinson, battle NCO for 82nd CAB. “This is something we all need to think about and do.”

The prayer breakfast also included special prayers for leaders, the military and families.

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ambition to accomplish the task at hand. But, I do ask everyone to do some deliberate planning to avoid unnecessary risks and keep 'em in the fight.

Leaders need to circulate the battlefield and conduct “eyeball maintenance” ensuring standards are known and met or exceeded. We Soldiers will never have the opportunity as we do in combat to know each other as we sleep, eat, work and play side by side. Take a few moments everyday to get to know each other better and thank each other for what we do. A pat on the back or a boot in the ### goes a long way. I thank every member of Team Pegasus, Soldiers, civilians, spouses, loved ones, forward or rear. We have a clearly defined mission and are motivated to make a difference. Stay focused! On Pegasus' Wings...All the Way, Airborne!



HOSPITAL from page 1

poverty-stricken Local Nationals who live outside the gate of our installation. While the medical services they provide may be significantly different from the standard to which we as Americans are accustomed, they still fill a much needed void within the local community. The local populace live in such abject poverty, that many of the Egyptian medical staff claim that these Afghan civilians consume the medicine as food. One winter visit to this hospital facility and you will see seven year-old children walking around in sub-freezing temperatures with only flip-flops on their feet, and nothing on their head. Not to mention, their insufficient diet, and sub-third world living conditions.

They come daily by the hundreds to the hospital; men one day, and women with children the next. Women carrying babies, children escorted by mothers or older siblings, and the aged or infirmed carried upon the backs of the young and the strong. While the Egyptian focus is upon medical care, now enters the Pegasus humanitarian effort. Working carefully through our liaison, we scheduled our initial humanitarian visit to the facility. Loaded down with blankets, pillows, sheets, shirts, pants, socks, baby items, toothbrushes and candy (hence the need for toothbrushes!) – we went as angels of mercy to distribute these much needed items to those who need them most.

Little can be said to describe the scene that day, as well as its impact upon all involved. If indeed a picture is worth a thousand words, then those images captured by our PAO rep who accompanied us would indeed speak volumes. Charity aside, it proved to be a major step in the continued winning over of the hearts and minds of the local Afghan populace. The child who will forever remember an ACU-clad U.S. soldier handing him/her a piece of candy, or the young mother receiving her new baby's first proper set of warm clothing. Secondly, was the cooperative interaction between all concerned: giver and recipient, Pegasus Trooper and Local National; Egyptian soldier and Local National; and of course Pegasus trooper and Egyptian soldier – all working together toward a productive end. Joint Coalition effort at its finest, working toward the benefit of mankind. Most impressive was the religious diversity co-mingled in this effort: Local National Muslim people receiving aid from Christian (Catholic



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

Chaplain (Capt.) Shmuel Felzenberg, TF Pegasus chaplain, greets Egyptian Hospital Commander, Col. Yasser with a handshake.

and Protestant), Buddhist, and other-faith-affiliated U.S. Soldiers led by a Jewish Rabbi working in cooperation with Muslim Arab doctors. If heaven could ever shine brightly upon mankind, this was as good a moment as any.

Admittedly, much of what we distributed were items left over from our 10th Mountain CAB predecessors. The time now comes for us to raise the call for support back to our home shores. We encourage family, friends and other supportively-minded persons who wish to participate in the continuity of this mission, to start the collection of such humanitarian aid items back home. These items can then be boxed and shipped for transportation overseas in coordination with guidance from the 82nd CAB Rear Detachment leadership for timely distribution. You too can thus be a part of this great ministry of charity and goodwill. All the way!

TOAs complete, 82nd CAB is in charge



Task Force Talon



Task Force Atlas



Task Force Corsair



Task Force DesertHawk

"From Slavery to Freedom, what can you do?"

Pfc. Aubree Rundle
Task Force Public Affairs Office

BAGRAM AIRFIELD – "We should emphasize not Negro History, but the Negro in History. What we need is not a history of selected races or nations, but the history of the world void of national bias, race, hate and religious prejudice." – Dr. Carter G. Woodson.

Members from the Combined Joint Task Force gathered for the Black History Observance Feb. 23 at the MWR clamshell in celebration of Black History month. The guest speaker at this event was the deputy commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, Brig. Gen. Rodney O. Anderson.

Prior to Anderson's speech, the Enduring Faith Chapel Gospel Choir performed two songs, 'Grateful' and 'Walk with Me'. These songs were chosen by EFCGC to present a message of what black people have been through, where they stand today and what it took for them to get this far, said WO1 Kenneth C. Body, a member of the EFCGC.

"From slavery to freedom are mere words until you stop to reflect the blood, sweat, tears and prayers associated with the black people of America," Anderson said.

"I believe that the military serves as a role model in our community and around the world in recognizing the great contributions made by African Americans," said Air Force Staff Sgt. Ebony Gaskin, the mistress of ceremony. "With our continuous mission, commanders at all levels strive to have a strong pro-active, equal opportunity program."

Black History has been studied and honored each February since Dr. Carter G. Woodson, a noted black historian



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

Brigadier Gen. Rodney O. Anderson, the deputy commander of the 82nd Airborne Division followed by Col. Kelly Thomas, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade commander receiving the traditional Black History Month meal during the observance at Bagram's MWR clamshell Feb. 23.

and author, began the tradition in 1926. Woodson's intentions were to bring to the nation's attention the contributions of black people throughout American history.

"It is important to protect, preserve and promote our nation's fruitful journey to freedom," said Anderson.

The month of February was chosen for this celebration based on the birthdays of Fredrick Douglass, an ex-slave and slavery abolitionist and Abraham Lincoln, our nation's sixteenth president and the signer of The Emancipation Proclamation. These two men were a great influence on the black American population.

"From slavery to freedom, what can I do?", Anderson asked the audience at the observance. "What can you do on the continued journey to freedom?"

Anderson shared a timeline beginning with the establishment of slavery in America, acknowledging the many slaves who died on the way from Africa and during their enslavement, and the battles for freedom throughout the civil war, and the non-violent movements of Rev. Martin L. King Jr.

At the conclusion of his speech Anderson challenged the audience, "be proud of your heritage, learn your history, defend your country, treat all people with dignity and respect, and keep your physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual lives in balance as this nation depends on you."



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

The Enduring Faith Chapel Gospel Choir sings "Walk with Me" during the Black history observance at Bagram Airfield's MWR clamshell Feb. 23

Army Vice Chief reenlists Troopers during visit

Sgt. 1st Class Krishna M. Gamble
Task Force Pegasus Public Affairs Office

BAGRAM AIRFIELD – Seven Soldiers from the 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade will receive more than \$103,000 in tax free money.

Vice Chief of Staff of the Army Gen. Richard A. Cody rendered the oath of enlistment Feb. 11 to Staff Sgts. David Brown, Robert Derk and Seth Necessary, Sgt. Robert Tarrants, Spcs. Tristan Edwards and Wendy Moy, and Pfc. Pearly Boatwright, IV, for a combined total of 42 years of continued service in the Army. All Soldiers will stay within the brigade.

“You’ve got Soldiers that know they are well led, but most importantly, they trust each other – Soldier to Soldier, unit to unit,” Cody said to the 82nd CAB leadership. “[I’ve seen] very disciplined Soldiers; Soldiers who have respect for others and respect for the unit. This is a great leadership team.”

Cody spent a few days at Bagram Airfield touring the area, asking questions, receiving briefs from 82nd Airborne Division leadership and reenlisting Troopers. Cody even asked questions to a few Soldiers preparing for the promotion board.

“My job as Vice Chief is to stay ahead, think ahead because the enemy will get a vote. That’s why I ask questions – not to second guess you, but when you ask for something, you will have a response,” Cody said.

“[Gen. Cody is a] great model and spokesperson representing not only Army Aviation, but Army Soldiers at Congress and the Secretary of Defense,” said Col. Kelly Thomas, 82nd CAB commander.

During a breakfast hosted by the 82nd CAB leadership, Cody who is the senior aviation officer in the Army, explained the reason jump status was removed from certain units. He asked questions about current aircraft systems, pilot training standards and what issues he needed to take with him.

“I like combat aviation brigades because it’s like a symphony with all the different instruments and talents. This outfit is in great shape [with the challenges of] the toughest terrain, the harshest climate and the enemy, but you have great leadership,” Cody said.

In addition to the Soldiers from the 82nd CAB, Cody also reenlisted nine Soldiers Feb. 10 from the 82nd Airborne Division, the 95th Military Police Battalion from Hanau, Germany and the 699th Maintenance Company, Fort Irwin, Calif.



Sgt. 1st Class Krishna M. Gamble

Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Richard A. Cody gives a coin to Pvt. Thomas Dekenipp during his visit to Afghanistan, wishing him much success as he begins his Army career. Dekenipp is a Blackhawk mechanic with Company B, 122nd Aviation Support Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade.

“I watch what you do very, very closely and I think you do it pretty well. It’s a tough job,” Cody said. “Know that while you are out here, America appreciates your service. We are proud of you. Take care of each other and thank you.”

Soldiers who reenlisted during Cody’s visit from the 82nd CAB and the 82nd Airborne Division are listed on page 8.

Local Nationals help renovate Camp Albert

Pfc. Aubree Rundle
Task Force Public Affairs Office

BAGRAM AIRFIELD – Building rooms in “b-huts” and beds for Soldiers, the Local Nationals who work in the carpentry shop help accommodate the needs of the 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade while they stay on Camp Albert during Operation Enduring VIII.

Working seven days a week, the same group of men walk from neighboring villages and farther everyday to earn an income to support their families.

“The workers must arrive each day with valid identification to pass through the entry control point and sign into the Mayor’s Cell on Camp Albert before they are able to begin working here,” said Staff Sgt. Jose Ortiz, Platoon Sergeant, Headquarters and Headquarters Company, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade.



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

One of the Local Nationals from the carpentry shop is hammering nails into the supporting board for the top of a bed frame in one of the “b-huts” for a Soldier on Camp Albert.

ary.”

With the distance traveled every day and the limited supplies, the Local Nationals continue to arrive for work daily just as they did for 10th CAB, the brigade 82nd CAB just transferred authority with.

“The Local Nationals in the carpentry shop have been an essential part of making sure all Soldiers are staying in rooms instead of tents and so far have renovated 43 rooms since they began working with us,” said Capt. Philip Mazingo, HHC commander.

Currently, the carpentry shop has just completed the restoration of Camp Albert’s laundry facility after a mold infestation was discovered.

“I realize what it means to the Local Nationals to have the United States Army here in support of Operation Enduring Freedom and I try to make the best impression as not only an NCO, but first and foremost as a Soldier,” said White.



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

Sgt. David White, noncommissioned officer-in-charge of the carpentry shop posing with Local Nationals in front of their hut on Camp Albert.

These Local Nationals are supervised by Sgt. David White, the noncommissioned officer-in-charge of Camp Albert’s carpentry shop. Even with a communication barrier, the team uses drawings and broken English to work together to complete

numerous work orders submitted to renovate offices and living areas for just the task forces.

“I look at my team like having Soldiers and we exchange the same level of respect,” said White.

A few of the tasks the carpentry shop is faced with daily are; taking four-man “b-huts” and making them into eight-man living quarters, raising beds to provide Soldiers with more living space, and building desks and shelves to provide workspace for offices around Camp Albert. The carpentry shop works together up to six-hours a day.

“The challenges that we face are wood supply for each job and the limited time we have each day to complete our work orders,” said White. “Even with these disadvantages, my team was able to complete more than 200 work orders during the month of Janu-

Saboor Noor, the shift leader and translator for the Local Nationals who work in Camp Albert’s carpentry shop, is marking measurements on a sheet of wood to build shelves to help better organized the offices of different task forces located on the camp.



Pfc. Aubree Rundle

Cody awards Senior Aviator Wings to BN Commander

Pfc. Aubree Rundle
Task Force Public Affairs Office

BAGRAM AIRFIELD -- Task Force Talon Commander, Lt. Col. Nicholas Chronis received his Senior Aviator Wings Feb 11, when Vice Chief of Staff of the Army, Gen. Richard A. Cody presented them during a re-enlistment dinner at the KBR dining facility.

To receive Senior Aviator Wings, a pilot must complete seven years and 1000 hours of flight time.

Chronis completed his flight hours in Afghanistan while conducting a mission to Forward Operations Base, Gardez prior to Cody's visit.

"This is a professional honor within the branch," said Chronis. "All aviators strive to become experts in their field and meet their goals."

Upholding the duties of TF Talon's commander, opportunities for flight time are limited, said Chronis.

"Without the help of the many crew members that have worked with me over these past years I would not have achieved this goal."



Sgt. 1st Class Krishna M. Gamble

The vice chief of staff of the Army, Gen. Richard A. Cody pins Senior Aviator Wings on 3rd Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade Commander, Lt. Col. Nicholas Chronis in recognition of his achievement of completing 1000 hours of flight time.

Reenlistments

122nd Aviation Support Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade

Staff Sgt. David Alan Brown, from Durham, N.C. reenlisted for four years as a machinist.

Staff Sgt. Robert Kenneth Derk of Bridgeport, West Va. reenlisted for six years as a Chinook crewchief.

Staff Sgt. Seth Allen Necessary of Abingdon, Va. reenlisted indefinitely as a wheeled vehicle mechanic.

Spc. Tristan Grayson Edwards of St. Petersburg, Fla., reenlisted for four years as an avionics systems repairer.

Spc. Wendy Mchelle Moy of Phoenix, Az, reenlisted for six years as an aircraft powertrain repairer.

3rd Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade

Sgt. Robert Joseph Tarrants of Mobile, Ala., reenlisted for six years as a Black Hawk crewchief.

Pfc. Pearley Watson Boatwright IV of Monetta, S.C., reenlisted for five years as a wheeled vehicle mechanic.

82nd Airborne Division

Sgt. Charles Adler assigned to Division Sustainment Brigade

Sgt. 1st Class Melloyd Carter assigned to Division Sustainment Brigade

Staff Sgt. Richard Childress, Jr. assigned to the 4th Brigade Combat Team

Sgt. Jessica Shaffer assigned to the Division Sustainment Brigade

Staff Sgt. David Rice assigned to Division Sustainment Brigade

Sgt. Matthew Tenhundfeld assigned to the 82nd Division Band

Staff Sgt. Jeffrey Deudzienski assigned to the 82nd Division Band

Other units

Sgt. 1st Class Paul Adams assigned to the 95th Military Police Battalion K-9 Unit, Hanau, Germany

Staff Sgt. Augusto Garcia assigned to the 699th Maintenance Company, Fort Irwin, Calif.

Task Force Corsair keeps Kandahar Airfield safe

Pfc. Aubree Rundle
Task Force Pegasus Public Affairs Office

KANDAHAR AIRFIELD- Soldiers from Forward Support Company E, 2nd Battalion, 82nd Combat Aviation Brigade's Task Force Corsair have maintained the safety and security of Kandahar Airfield by guarding the Entry Control Point from the day they arrived at KAF Jan. 26

"These Soldiers are very important to our mission as far as supporting overall security and preventing enemy entry onto KAF," said Command Sgt. Maj. Keith Little, TF Corsair's Command Sergeant Major.

The troops from FSC along with security forces, accompanied by military working dogs uphold the protection of KAF by conducting 100 percent identification check, scanning and acquiring signature verification requirements and performing full spectrum search of all civilian personal and vehicles entering KAF, said Little.

With more than 300 vehicles entering the gate daily and nearly 1,100 Local Nationals traveling by foot, the main focus of the Soldiers on duty is to maintain a strong force and prevent unauthorized personal from causing destruction to equipment, bringing illegal paraphernalia on KAF and keeping the Soldiers safe, said Staff Sgt. Michael Cabezza, the Noncommissioned Officer in charge of the guard.

"My team is committed to keeping the ECP under control daily and is trained to handle each situation as it comes," said Cabezza.

The troops from the FSC work eight-hour shifts during which they conduct search procedures as well as pulling security.

"My main focus is making sure these Soldiers keep their heads on straight," said Little. "They are all extremely motivated and enjoy their contribution to the mission by controlling the security of the installation." Since TF Corsair began ECP guard there have been numerous attempts made to bring paraphernalia onto KAF. These incidences



Spc. Alex Brown

Command Sgt. Maj. David Brasfield, Task Force Pegasus command sergeant major, presents a brigade coin to Staff Sgt. Micheal Cabezza, NCOIC of the Entry Control Point at Kandahar Airfield.

where handled by confiscating the items and handing them over to the military police, said Little. If a person is turned away twice from the ECP, that individual will be banned from KAF, "we can't take any risks," said Little.

Aviation Chapel Weekly Schedule

Monday: Old Testament Bible Study

Tuesday: Movie Night

Wednesday: Protestant Worship /Christian Education

Thursday: Catholic Mass / Spanish Catholic Mass

Friday: Jewish Sabbath Worship

Saturday: Spanish Bible Study

Aviation Chapel Movie Night

showtime is every Tuesday at 1430Z/1900L

6 March: "Raiders of the Lost Ark"

13 March: "The Bourne Supremacy"

20 March: "The Jerk"

27 March: "Stealth"

POC for this event is TF Pegasus Religious Support Team at 231-2546/2547

Behavioral health specialists ease servicemembers' minds

Pfc. Matthew Leary

Task Force Fury Public Affairs Office

SALERNO--Long hours of stressful work faced by deployed troops, combined with little privacy and not much free time, can end up taking a mental and emotional toll. Fortunately, Soldiers serving in every Brigade Combat Team in the Army will now have a greater opportunity to visit a behavioral health clinic and speak to a trained specialist.

Behavioral health used to be a division-level function, but the Army's adoption of a modular brigade combat team structure changed that, explained Spc. Alex Townsend, a behavioral health specialist assigned to the 82nd Airborne Division's Company C, 782nd Brigade Support Battalion, 4th Brigade Combat Team.

"Since the modularity has taken place, they want people at the brigade to focus on (behavioral health)," Townsend said.

"You are living and working with the same people for months, and there is literally no place to escape for a moment," said Capt. Maria A. Kimble, a behavioral health officer assigned to Co. C, 782nd Bde. Spt. Bn. In order to help the troops, the behavioral health clinic offers a variety of services, from smoking cessation to command consultation, but the main service it offers is individual and group counseling to Soldiers. These services give Soldiers an opportunity to just speak their mind to someone, Kimble said.

"Basically, it's talk therapy," Kimble said. "Someone has something on their mind, whether it is something that developed from operational issues or home-front issues such as worrying about their children, girlfriend or boyfriends back home, or finance problems. We assist with anything that they want help coping with or resolving."

Kimble said her past experiences and the knowledge she has gained working with veterans are helping her during this deployment.

"I have experience working with World War II veterans and Vietnam veterans who have been appropriately diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and have been dealing with it for years," Kimble said. "If you speak to them now, they will say they felt they were weak if they had to talk to someone. Now, they say if there's one thing (I) can convey to today's Soldiers it's

that it does make a difference to just talk to someone and get it out."

The critical-event debriefing is another service the behavioral health clinic will offer. A CED is a group-counseling service conducted after a potentially traumatic incident that could affect the Soldiers involved.

"I strongly believe in the critical-event debriefing," Kimble said. "These are done whenever there are extreme tragic incidents Soldiers are involved in. ... They are very hard for the Soldiers to handle on their own."

These efforts are designed to keep paratroopers in the fight and have them perform their duties at 100 percent, Kimble added. By coordinating with the ministry teams and unit leaders, they are trying to maximize the effectiveness of their care.

Kimble has seen firsthand the success these programs can have, having been deployed to Iraq in a similar capacity. There, Kimble treated more than 800 Soldiers and conducted 30 CEDs.

"I had one Soldier, he didn't think he would have made it that far through the deployment if wasn't for being able to come in and just talk things out," Kimble noted.

Clinic members will be available at their offices on base, and will also travel throughout Regional Command East in Afghanistan to search out Soldiers in need of help.

While the behavioral health personnel are actively providing help for the Soldiers of Task Force Fury here, they also are combating the stigma attached to their profession at times, Townsend said.

"Don't be scared or worry that it will be detrimental to you or your career to come here, because if you're at a low, we are here to help bring you up," Townsend said. "And we are here to help you maintain that."

Townsend explained that the old idea of not talking about the stress of deployment or the violence of combat is out of date.

"It was mainly due to not realizing how beneficial behavioral health can be to the soldier or Paratrooper in the Army," he said.

The success of their operations is evident in the response behavioral health personnel receive from the Soldiers they treat, Townsend said.